

## How Can Academic Medical Centers and Teaching Hospitals Address the Social Determinants of Health?

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**Social determinants of health** are the conditions in which people are born, grow up, live, work, age, and receive health care.<sup>1</sup> Academic medical centers and teaching hospitals are uniquely positioned to address these factors and have a powerful impact on the health of communities.

### Basic Necessities



- The availability of basic necessities such as healthy food and clean water is vital for the health of communities.
- Decreased rates of obesity and increased life expectancy can be partly attributed to better nutrition.<sup>2</sup>

- **Gundersen Lutheran Health System** has been committed to the health of its communities by working with local restaurants, convenience stores, and other retailers to offer healthy food choices to its community.<sup>3</sup>

### Built Environment



- Health is influenced by the safety and physical surroundings of homes, neighborhoods, and workplaces.
- Inadequate housing, dangerous streets, and blighted neighborhoods all have a negative impact on health.<sup>2</sup>

- As a prominent institution within a city challenged with crime, extreme poverty, and poor living conditions, **Henry Ford Health System** has partnered with several institutions to improve local neighborhoods and develop safe and affordable housing for the residents of Detroit.<sup>3</sup>

### Education



- Educational opportunity can lead to positive health outcomes.
- People with more educational opportunities have better jobs, more affluence, greater health, and improved quality of life.<sup>2</sup>

- **Johns Hopkins University**, in collaboration with Morgan State University, has developed a new public school in one of the poorest neighborhoods in east Baltimore. The school, named Henderson-Hopkins, is part of a major redevelopment project that includes new science and technology buildings, a park, retail development, and mixed-income housing.<sup>4</sup>

### Community



- Social connectedness and a sense of community is important to achieving good health.
- Social cohesion, defined as the ability to obtain social support from family, friends, and community members, is associated with lower mortality rates.<sup>2</sup>

- **Florida International University** has developed the Green Family Foundation NeighborhoodHELP (Health Education Learning Program), which exposes students to the delivery of health care from a family and community perspective that will shape the way they interact with patients for the rest of their careers.<sup>5</sup>

### Economic Stability



- Economic factors play a key role in the health of communities.
- The unemployment rate has an impact on rates of domestic violence, substance abuse, depression, and physical illness.<sup>2</sup>

- **University Hospitals** launched *The UH Difference: Vision 2010*, which aimed to direct as much spending as possible toward local minority- and female-owned businesses to produce lasting change in northeast Ohio.<sup>6</sup>

### References

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